THE

INDEPENDENT FREEHOLDER's

LETTER

TO THE

PEOPLE of *ENGLAND.*

(Price One Shilling.)

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THE

INDEPENDENT FREEHOLDER's

LETTER

TO THE

PEOPLE of *ENGLAND*,

UPON THE

One Thing Needful

AT THIS

FINAL CRISIS.

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THE INDEPENDENT FREE-HOLDER's LETTER, &c.

Friends and Countrymen,

LETTERS to you, and addreſſes to your prince and repreſentatives, have been numerous; but none have aimed directly at the foundation of your misfortunes. Some have called for juſtice againſt an admiral; ſome have thought your miniſters more culpable; juſtice is indeed deſirable; never was more neceſſary. 'To pay well and hang 'well; to protect the innocent and puniſh the 'oppreſſors, are the hinges and arguments of 'government.' But however momentous the diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments may be to the preſervation of ſtates, heads are no recompence for the loſs of dominions. Nor does it avail whoſe head is on or off, unleſs you can maintain parliamentary independency; recover your free and frequent conſtitutional parliaments; *the one thing needful* to preſerve the liberties of England; noticed in very few addreſſes; and no where with that weight which the ſuperlative importance of the ſubject plainly requires.

Of the three eſtates of this realm, one compoſes a branch of our legiſlature, repreſenting you, the commonalty of England; and every Engliſhman who is not of the houſe of lords, is of this branch, called the houſe of commons. Be he of what rank or quality ſoever, from the prince to the loweſt peaſant, he is intended in law to be there preſent, either in perſon or by repreſentation; and the conſent of parliament is therefore taken to be the conſent of the whole nation.

This houſe is properly your houſe; their act your act; and as the expediency of ſtate requires that you delegate your power, ſo your only means of delegating it, *legally*, is by free elections. Without real freedom of choice, no right, no real authority is conveyed. On the contrary, an anti-conſtitutional and lawleſs power is aſſumed, of acting through your name, in defiance of you.

By our conſtitution and undeniable antient laws, our king was once a year to convene his parliament. Before the conqueſt parliaments were held twice a year. Afterwards, ſeveral ſtatutes were made to prevent abuſes from government; on the one hand, by not calling parliaments; on the other hand, by continuing them too long. By ſtatutes in the reigns

reigns of Edward I. and III. they were to be held once a year, and oftner, if needful. Which ſtatutes were declared to be of force, even in the debauched reign of Charles II. who further aſſented to enact, that they ſhould not be intermitted above three years. And leſt parliaments once called, ſhould grow cunning in office; and ſitting many years covered with privileges, ſhould forget that they repreſented other men; leſt they ſhould contract private intereſts, and take care only of themſelves; league with adminiſtrations to betray their original truſt; and give up, as Burnet expreſſes it, 'all the money, and all the liber-'ties of England;' in ſhort, leſt parliaments of long duration, ſhould at certain conjunctures, become on the one hand, enabled to diſtreſs the crown, as hath happened in this nation; or on the other hand, be corrupted by miniſters, to become inſtruments of tyranny and ſell the people, as hath alſo happened among us; proviſion was therefore made after ſettlement of affairs at the revolution; when our ſuffering anceſtors had juſt eſcaped from arbitrary power; 'That no parliament *whatſoever* ſhould have '*any continuance* longer than for three years '*only at the* fartheſt, to be accounted from 'the day appointed by the writ for meeting.'

This triennial bill was introduced in 1693, and paſſed both houſes of parliament; but rejected by the king, to the great jealouſy of

the nation. Upon which, in the following year, the ſame bill was again brought into parliament, and keeping pace with the money bill, that never failing price of any law, (a ſolid reaſon for a tight hand upon your purſe-ſtrings) it received the royal aſſent without heſitation.

By means of this law, the conſtituents had ſome check upon their repreſentatives for the ſpace of twenty years; in which time they twice brought France to terms; once to their very feet.

Your condition is altered. You feel the alteration. At the acceſſion of the houſe of Hanover, your boaſted whig adminiſtration, the nominal aſſertors of your liberty, found, or forged reaſons to ſap this root of liberty.

In the firſt year of the late king, (a prince as honeſt as ever ſwayed a ſcepter; but a ſtranger to our conſtitution) miniſters contrived that the parliament, whoſe genuine conſtitutional authority had been ſtretched from one year to three, ſhould create themſelves for ſeven. The effects are obvious.

This ſtep was taken under colour of avoiding expence, and animoſity at elections; as well as to diſcourage factions from renewing the then late rebellion, and favouring invaſions.

But

But ſuppoſing theſe to have been juſtifiable motives at that critical period; we do not find that the government (who had received this ſtrong token of dangerous confidence) when it was effectually ſecured from rebellions and invaſions, ever pointed out a repeal of this law; thereby to reinſtate the people in the enjoyment of that important right which they had yielded in a fit of zeal, for the ſuppoſed temporary preſervation of that very government; warning for poſterity to hold faſt their eſſentials.

Had the then views been confined to invaſions, and rebellions, a temporary ſtatute would have anſwered the end.

If the ſurmiſe in the preamble of this ſeptennial bill is well founded, that long parliaments are deſirable to avoid animoſity and expence at elections, it would be an argument for perpetual parliaments.

Animoſity would vaniſh if there were no contention. And little would be the contention, if miniſters would ceaſe to purſue improper meaſures; which oblige them to lay baits for members.

As for expence to the candidates, we ſee ſtupendous appointments for public officers, of little or no public uſe. Some of them nu-

ſances.

ſances. Why ſhould the eſſential ſervants of the nation, be at any expence for ſerving it?

But if candidates muſt continue to bear the expence of elections, the true way to moderate it is by frequent ones. Then, a vote will bring little money at market; none, if miniſters are honeſt. At all events the deſigning man who buys the vote to ſell the truſt, muſt quickly by diſſolution of parliament, return to his private capacity, with a brand in his forehead.

Suppoſe the worſt; that he is a French penſioner; he will ſoon be detected, abhorred by the nation and excluded parliament. If you apprehend a progreſs of your enemy in corrupting the ſubject, this is not to be oppoſed by perpetuating parliaments, but by hanging the betrayers of your ſtate. Then others will fear to betray it.

A future parliament have as good a right to grant themſelves a power for twenty-one, or ſixty-one years; as that parliament had to enlarge theirs to ſeven:

With ſeptennial parliaments, one maxim ſeems to have been introduced; that miniſters ſhould pillage and corrupt with impunity. And when too obnoxious to continue in office, ſhould then reſign with honour; perhaps with

with title and penſion; leaguing with their ſucceſſors. What nation can ſtand this maxim?

Had you as formerly, your annual parliaments, with frequent and eaſy means of changing freely ſuch repreſentatives as ſhould deceive you; miniſters could not, they would not attempt to ſell your dominions, nor could they continue any ſeries of public meaſures injurious to the honour of your prince, or ſubverſive of your liberties. They would not betray, if they were ſpeedily to account. But let them find means to ſtifle enquiries, or ſecure the ſuffrage of their judges, and no adventure can be hazardous.

In a neighbouring nation, their condition with reſpect to enjoyment of free and frequent parliaments is ſtill worſe than ours. They ſeem quite debarred the ordinary means of chuſing men to expreſs their preſent ſenſe of public meaſures; their parliaments being held by a ſort of tenure for life. Tending in effect to a kind of Ariſtocracy; exceſſively convenient to a miniſter who would wean them from their conſtituents; dictate their proceedings, and conceal the true ſentiments of a nation from the throne. Their laſt parliament ſubſiſted about thirteen years; and would probably have ſubſiſted until this day, had their monarch lived ſo long. Their preſent

ſent one is near thirty years old, although the parliamentary conſtitution (taken directly from ours) intended it to have been in their power to have changed their repreſentatives thirty times within that ſpace.

When we inſiſted upon triennial parliaments in king William's reign; their parliaments, if ſuch they then had, were in a lethargy.

No wonder that a miniſter can check every dawn of public ſpirit; and make thoſe diſciplined troops give him any thing, although he account for nothing. The ſubject is of a ſerious nature; it demands your attention. The means, the dangerous, the fatal means of miniſterial influence enlarged there, will rebound here. And if the patient conſtituents of that iſland, have through diſuſe forgot their rights, or live inſenſible of their ailments, we ought not. As their grievances muſt affect us in profit as well as politicks. The continual inſurrections of the antient Iriſh, the maſſacre of 1641, the war and deſolation ſpread by king James, have kept their arts, huſbandry and improvements in a ſtate of infancy, now budding towards ſome bearing, in ſome meaſure to requite our former vaſt expence in ſupporting them, the gambols of the miniſter nips their ſpring; to the manifeſt damage of this kingdom where their wealth muſt ever flow, and the profits of their trade center.

Having

Having expreſſed your conſtitutional right to frequent parliaments; it remains to ſhew that you have the ſame right to *free ones*; to an *abſolute freedom* in all your elections.

So early as Henry the IVth's reign this was particularly provided for by parliament. The ſtatute ſays, *a free and indifferent* election ſhall be made of knights of the ſhire, *notwithſtanding any requeſt or command* to the contrary. It is to be made without *prayer* or *gift*. The king himſelf is prohibited to interfere. His ſervants have not higher authority.

To maintain this freedom, we ſee numberleſs ſtatutes made from the conqueſt to the revolution. And at that famous Æra, when the convention parliament made a formal declaration in writing to aſſert the rights and liberties of the ſubject, one of their chief complaints againſt the abdicated king, was, 'violating the freedom of elections.' And one of their chief claims which they inſiſted upon eſtabliſhing, I may now call it *the chief*, becauſe all others depend upon it; was, 'that 'elections of members of parliament ought to 'be *free*.'

This memorable aſſembly, in confidence that the prince of Orange would inviolably preſerve thoſe rights, created him king. And he, obtaining the crown by voluntary act of the nation, the beſt title to a crown, ſolemnly acknowledged in parliament, that the rights and liberties then aſſerted, were the antient, true, and indubitable rights and liberties of the people. And thereupon it was enacted, that all officers and miniſters of the crown ſhould in *all times to come, act conformably to that declaration.*

Is it poſſible that a ſtronger claim could be made of parliamentary freedom, or a more ſolemn compact with the crown for preſervation of it?

The lord wardens had uſurped a power of nominating to each of the cinque ports, one perſon to be elected member of parliament. And in the ſecond year of king William, an act was made, declaring all ſuch nominations to be contrary to the laws and ſtatutes of the realm.

They made another act prohibiting all exciſe officers to influence votes, and incapacitating them if they did: Well knowing that the

the freedom of the ſubject wholly depended upon the freedom of elections.

Should any miniſter of ſtate, or other public officer, after theſe many declaratory laws, preſume to influence elections, does he not openly aſſault the conſtitution? Fly in the face of our laws, and encroach upon our bill of rights? Is the ſubject bound to keep meaſures with a miniſter, who keeps none with the nation?

For the more effectual ſecuring this vital right of the people, a further cautionary proviſion was made in this reign. Our anceſtors, to prevent a relapſe into arbitrary power, judged it neceſſary to confer the crown upon a race of proteſtant princes. For this end they ſent to Hanover, and foreſeeing that an Engliſh king poſſeſſed of foreign dominions, muſt have a ſeparate intereſt, attended with uncommon temptations; they therefore, to prevent court influence in the popular branch of your legiſlature, wiſely inſerted in the act of ſucceſſion, (12 William III.) the very act which firſt ſettled the crown upon the houſe of Hanover, one limitation, 'That no man 'who had place or penſion ſhould be capable 'of ſitting in the houſe of commons;' a moſt neceſſary law though your kings were natives, and poſſeſſed of Britiſh dominions only.

Your parliaments well knew that the independent gentry of England, not the ſervants of the crown, were at all times, particularly at ſuch a time, the proper perſons to conſtitute that branch of the legiſlature belonging to the people. For this end we find many antient ſtatutes provide, that members ſhall be choſen of the gentlemen born in the county; again, that they ſhall be reſiant in the counties and boroughs.

The plan of our conſtitution was to have this houſe, the mouth and ſpirit of the people, a bullwark and ballance againſt the power of the crown and the lords; which would be impoſſible, if it were to conſiſt of the king's ſervants, or of men ſent to parliament, or influenced in parliament, by his ſervants; all which rights and freedoms of the ſubject, were amply declared, confirmed and provided for, by ſundry judicious laws enacted after the revolution.

By what management the place act (12 William III.) that moſt important law, propping the conſtitution, was repealed in a ſubſequent reign, is not neceſſary to diſcuſs; having been ſacrificed, upon a ſort of compromiſe, to prevent a breach among the friends of the ſucceſſion, and ſecure their poſſeſſion of the throne;

throne; a momentous point gained, at the expence of two invaluable laws, the place and triennial acts; either of which would probably have quieted America, and ſaved Minorca, that important hold, the loſs of which cannot fail of creating in the minds of the people ſome very unfavourable ſuſpicions.

Had we, like the French, ſent American governours, not to pillage but content the ſubject, and amidſt that content, ſent fleets with caſh and proper land officers, (not men culled for the job of the miniſter) inſtead of tranſporting regiments, at great expence, and importing foreign troops in their room, at a farther immenſe expence to the nation, and with the diſguſt of the ſubject, we had ſaved our treaſure and troops; our blood and our territories. Our hardy and valiant brethren of America, fitter for warfare in that country, than the beſt Europeans; pleaſed with a righteous government, and animated with a confidence that their liberties ſtood unſhaken at home, would not only have defended their own poſſeſſions, and preſerved the honour of the Britiſh crown, but probably have driven their turbulent foes from the northern Continent——Juſtly to be driven thence, for invading our rights.

This ſurmiſe will not ſeem extraordinary, when you conſider that parliaments are the political

political eyes and ears of the monarch; his ſupreme council ſuperintending the whole realm, and entitled to free acceſs in order to ſet forth all miſconduct of his officers in fleet, army, and all other councils and public ſtations whatſoever. They the grand inquiſitors of the realm are to call to account overgrown criminals above the reach of ordinary juſtice; ſuch againſt whom the ſubject could not otherwiſe obtain right. The greater the perſon the more proper for the undertaking and encounter of this honourable aſſembly, coming from all parts of the realm, and repreſenting the whole people of England.

'It was ſaid by lord Bacon to ſir Lionel 'Cranfield, newly made made lord treaſurer; 'that he would recommend to his lordſhip, 'and in him to all great officers of the crown, 'one conſiderable rule to be carefully obſerv-'ed; which was, *remember, a parliament 'will come.*'

'*Peſſima gens humani generis*, ſay our par-'liamentary writers, always abhorred a par-'liament, becauſe they all knew that they 'ſhould be called to an impartial and ſtrict 'account, and be puniſhed according to their 'demerits.' A never failing iſſue from free and frequent parliaments.

They

They are the ſanctuary of the diſtreſſed ſubject. The redreſs of grievances is their particular province; generally to be conſidered before ſupplies, leſt it be not regarded afterwards. They are to cheriſh your manufactures, protect and advance your trade; they are to raiſe money ſufficient for the exigencies of the ſtate, and no more; narrowly to inſpect the public accounts, and ſee that the ſupplies be frugally and honeſtly expended for the purpoſes they were granted. Or the miniſter of ſtate might as well tax you by his arret. The condition of Engliſhmen and Frenchmen would be the ſame. In fine, your parliament is to take care that no detriment accrue to the crown, the commonwealth, or the conſtitution.

Important ends abundantly anſwered, if you freely and frequently elect your repreſentatives. But ſhould a prime miniſter, that modern lord of the public, a monſter not known to your laws; ſhould this Engliſh grand vizier, by places, penſions, titles, weight of government, public money, or other anti-conſtitutional means and Italian arts, contrary to your laws, and to the ends and purpoſes of your revolution, procure his creatures to be returned or obtruded by falſe returns, and ſet in the place of your repreſentatives, what muſt you expect.

Would

Would ſuch men crave acceſs to the royal perſon in order to diſmiſs or puniſh the grand vizier and other of their own confederates? Would they redreſs grievances, where the redreſs tended to dethrone the miniſter and themſelves? Redreſs grievances which themſelves created? Would objects be fairly, if at all repreſented to the monarch, through their eyes and ears? Would they have moderation or mercy in their taxation of men, who ſold them the power of taxing at will? Would they call the vizier to ſtrict account, to any account, for money which themſelves had ſhared? Would they protect your trade when it interfered with his views?

Would ſuch men, would men picked up by a wary miniſter on account of their worldly talents, renounce the worldly power and profit juſt embraced, to purſue the permanent intereſt of their ſovereign and his family; or to maintain your rights, for ſupplanting of which they enliſted?

If they would not, then 'tis plain that the ſecurity of the proteſtant ſucceſſion, and the Britiſh conſtitution, linked in intereſt, depend upon real freedom of parliament.

We have heard of penſioner parliaments, and officers parliaments, and ſtanding parliaments

ments (as dangerous as ſtanding armies; more ſo;) but the Engliſhman's birth-right is a free parliament, a parliament of independent country gentlemen; upon ſuch his preſervation depends.

Beſides anti conſtitutional influence from adminiſtrations, we labour under ſome difficulties grown upon us by courſe of time, and evil cuſtoms, not ſufficiently checked by the legiſlature.

The ſtatute of 7 William III. 4. indeed voids all elections, where the elected has been at any expence in meat, drink or money, preſent promiſe or agreement, to procure votes. One of the beſt laws that ever was made in England, ſays Burnet, if it has the deſired effect, and be not evaded; abuſes in elections having grown to intolerable exceſs, threatening even the ruin of the nation.

Corruption, he ſays, ſpread ſo generally, that every thing went in that channel: By which means the *ſtrength and reputation of the houſe of commons* was very much ſunk. The moſt dangerous ſymptom your nation could feel!

This ſevere act, as it was then called, was therefore the more neceſſary, and ran thus:

'That after the teſt of the writ of ſummons 'to parliament, or iſſuing out or ordering of 'the writ or writs of election, or after any 'ſuch place becomes vacant in any parlia- 'ment, no perſon ſhall by himſelf, or by a- 'ny other ways or means on his behalf, or 'at his charge, before his election, directly 'or indirectly give to any perſon, having any 'voice, meat, drink, money, *&c.*'

Here the party is at liberty to expend what he pleaſes before the writ iſſues; and by conſtruction or practice upon this law, he may do the ſame at the time of his election, which, inſtead of a day, perhaps laſts a month; to the unſpeakable burthen upon the candidate, and encouragement of riot, which the populace would not chuſe to continue at their own charge.

The judicious friends of the public, it is hoped, will not ceaſe, until they have compaſſed ſome effectual remedy to prevent expence to the candidate *before*, *at*, and *after* the election.

Our wiſe anceſtors, to attach their truſtee to his conſtituents, ſupported him attending his public duty. To prevent his truſt from incumbering his fortune, and to free him from the temptation of picking up crums at the court, he had his appointed wages, the knight four

four ſhillings, the burgeſs two ſhillings a day *. A liberal allowance in former times. And the ſheriffs and head officers of corporations were obliged to levy the wages with the *other charges of the repreſentatives* †. Lamentable change of times!

Enormous expence of elections, in effect, deſtroys the natural freedom of choice, which neceſſarily becomes confined to men of large income and opulence, able to ſtand the expence, and willing to do ſo, for *your ſervice.*

Theſe men, thus remarkably ſtored with fortune, ought alſo to be endowed with capacity and integrity; they ſhould be approved friends to your rights and liberties; and poſſeſſed of your full confidence. They ought to be men of public ſpirit, that is, Fit to 'combat force 'and deluſion; to reconcile the true intereſt 'of governors and governed; to expoſe impoſ-'tors and reſiſt oppreſſors; to maintain the 'people in liberty, plenty, eaſe and ſecurity. '—— Men of ſteadfaſtneſs to good purpoſes, 'fidelity to their truſts, reſolution in difficul-'ties, and defiance of dangers ‡.'

All counties and boroughs do not abound with gentlemen anſwering this deſcription. And if they did, you would ſtill have a larger field to chuſe; if, according to the late quali-

 fication

* 23 Hen. VI. 11. † 35 Hen. VIII. 11.
‡ Cato's Letters, vol. II. p. 12, 13.

fication-act, gentlemen of three hundred a year could come into boroughs, and thoſe of ſix hundred freely into counties, without extravagant coſt to you or themſelves; then you could range through your diſtricts to elect the fitteſt as eaſily as the richeſt.

Your candidate, at preſent, is not only to wade through the heavy expence of an election, but, that being over, he has his chance for an hearing by petition in parliament, now become, perhaps through a political contrivance, as burthenſome as a chancery-ſuit. By which means many gentlemen of middling fortunes, whom you would chuſe to ſet up, are originally barred. They cannot lay down thouſands, to ſtand an election, for you, nor other thouſands, at the bar of the houſe; whilſt a man, perhaps of no fortune, but a place, and ſome fallacious qualification-acres, ſhall feel the expence; he may be kindly eaſed by the miniſter out of your pockets. Is it poſſible that country gentlemen can conſent againſt their own treaſury? What would this be, but the right hand fighting againſt the left?

Why ſhould not the ſevereſt puniſhment be allotted for any man who bribes, treats, gives a glaſs or a dinner, or ſollicits or applies for a voice, otherwiſe than by ſome general notice in the news-papers?

Mortal

Mortal ſymptoms gain ground ſo faſt, it is full time to ſpeak out, and end the matter at once to freedom or ſlavery.

Your real ſervants, intended to repreſent you, are barred, or broke, attempting to get in; whilſt the man, you cannot truſt, may be ſhowed into his place; and inſtead of ſuffering bankruptcy, perhaps make his fortune, by breaking down the barrier of your conſtitution.

Should your candidate, by ſome extraordinary good fortune, againſt wind and tide, gain his ſeat; having loaded his eſtate to get in, he is then to reſiſt the temptation of proſtituting himſelf to retrieve it; of giving you up to make himſelf whole.

Every conſideration opens to you the great importance of free, eaſy and frequent elections. Without theſe you muſt ever be galled with an unnatural repreſentative; antagoniſts raiſed to authority, inceſſantly drawing againſt the ſtrength, weight, numbers and inclination of your people; productive of obſtructions, to diſcompoſe, perhaps deſtroy the machine. Without theſe you are not a people, whoever guides your rudder, whether he be whig, tory, jacobite, or neutral perſon.

Miniſters

Miniſters of Rome and Satan! when you had us chained and ſtaked, and were ſetting fire to both ends of the ſtake, we found means to eſcape. Can an inſtantaneous ſucceſſion of fiends in a Britiſh miniſtry ſurpaſs you all? Rome, France and Stuart! The ſtateſmen of this iſle, proteſtant ſtateſmen, revolution ſtateſmen, nominal whig ſtateſmen, affecting zeal for the Houſe of Hanover, zeal kindled by avarice and ambition, with all the reins in their own hands, uncontrouled, have been accompliſhing for each of you, what you all united, could not do for yourſelves.

It was a prediction in the laſt age, that England could never fall but by its own hands.

To prevent that tremendous fall, look up for genuine parliaments. Whenever you think the ſtate of your nation requires new and free parliaments, exert your conſtitutional right of tendering petitions to the throne. Fix your thoughts upon freedom of elections, or determine never to think at all. If you are to ſupport an adminiſtration, take care that they ſupport you; or to what end revolutions, whiggiſm, and ſucceſſions? Let them leave you quietly poſſeſſed of your rightful and free repreſentative;

preſentative; enabling you to declare your thoughts on public affairs and perſons to your prince, that he and you, for mutual ſecurity, may act in concert and confidence. Redreſs of grievance will follow of courſe.

The power of making peace and war is not more legally fixed in the crown, than the right of free elections, void of all miniſterial influence, is fixed in the people. The ſame laws, which gave the throne to the houſe of Hanover, confirm to you this inherent conſtitutional right. Demand it, inſiſt upon it, maintain it.

Between ſlavery and freedom, there is no medium. It is life or death. When you enjoy a free and natural repreſentative, you are governed by your own conſent. When you are by any means deprived of this, you are then governed without your conſent.

No matter what change you ſee in the names of miniſters, or what alluring hopes are given you of changing meaſures; they may, they muſt ſoon revert to their putrid ſtate; they cannot avail without conſtitutional freedom of parliament.

Reſtore parliaments even to the triennial ſtate ſettled at the revolution, and you have

ſome chance that your maladies ceaſe. Reſtore them conſtitutionally to their annual ſtate, and your maladies muſt ceaſe; becauſe you can change your ſervants, until you procure ſuch as you like. Fail in your attempt to do one of theſe, and it is vain to ſeek for other relief.

Annual parliaments, that conſtitutional *covenant* from king to people, will initiate your gentry in the political affairs of your country. Many valuable men may be able to attend one year, who could not attend three or ſeven. The bare rotation of power has its many high advantages, beſides that equality and juſtice inſeparably connected to it. Without due rotation free governments muſt unavoidably degenerate into ariſtocracies or monarchies. The dominion of repreſentatives will not be monopolized; ordinary meaſures of government, which concern all, will be underſtood by all; honeſt country gentlemen of parts will be known to the world, and afford a field for choice of public ſpirited officers to fill your many important ſtations.

If you have frequent parliaments freely choſen, you have all that you can aſk. Such parliaments ever did, and ever will ſupport the Britiſh conſtitution of king, lords and commons. Such parliaments only can preſerve your prince and yourſelves. If you have

have not theſe, although you have, in appearance, every thing elſe, you have really nothing but a ſhadow, a *tenure at the will of the miniſter.*

Some dawn of hope ſeems to ariſe among you, upon change of miniſters; or at leaſt, change of ſome obnoxious ones; *in whoſe names* your moſt important buſineſs was tranſacted. Whether the ſecret directors of thoſe men are ſtill behind the curtain, to entrap, deceive, or betray a man, we hope, of public ſpirit who has ſucceeded; effects will quickly diſcover. Let facts, not fame, guide your judgments. If your new ſtate phyſicians do immediately and freely reſtore you to your free, your rightful and frequent conſtitutional parliaments, and leave your ſtate criminals, of all ſizes, open to fair trial and puniſhment; conclude that your new miniſters deſign to act uprightly. If, on the contrary, they league, and ſhift, and plot, to prevent this juſt and neceſſary reſtoration, eſſential to your ſecurity and content; then, it is evident they deſign neither.

If they act in concert with theſe public aggreſſors, to ſcreen their guilt, then, betrayed by the old, and deceived and ſold to the new, expect no deliverance by the means of adminiſtrations.

You ſee facts, advanced in print, and not contradicted; your very being ſtands at this day highly endangered by the commiſſion of them; yet does the publiſher of theſe facts, under a maſk of gentleneſs, declare againſt puniſhment. Removal from office, he concludes to be ſufficient. Your late miniſters approve this doctrine; your preſent ones, we hope, do not.

Britons! Can all injuries be done your country by your public officers of all ſorts; and no man be culpable? Shall fleets and armies appointed for your preſervation, become your diſgrace, and neither the counſellor forming a wicked plan, nor the commander executing it, be made an example for your future preſervation? What muſt ſuch conduct produce? Where lies your hope of remedy, but in freedom of parliament? Your political balm of Gilead. If your phyſician withholds the only medicine that can poſſibly effect a cure; then conclude that he feels your pulſe only to receive his fee, and preſcribes his opiate for worſe reaſons.

Whoever aſſumes the vice-royal ſeat, if he does not begin with redreſs of grievances, if his ſeſſion does not open with a free reſtoration of your antient parliamentary rights; he may

may be a miniſter for other purpoſes, but not for yours. Be his aſſurances ever ſo ſtrong, his excuſes ever ſo plauſible, his deſigns ever ſo artfully concealed, truſt him not; ſupport him not; by his *fruits* you are to know him.

To what purpoſe do you enliſt ſoldiers, levy taxes, or equip fleets, if your liberties be not firſt ſecured? To what end do you fight a foreign enemy, if you do not firſt eſtabliſh your domeſtic rights; to enjoy life when you are victorious?

Judge for yourſelves, and expect your neceſſary regulation at the beginning of your ſeſſion or not at all. Let who will be miniſter, you are Engliſhmen, entitled to the *pureſt freedom of choice* in *frequent elections*; the barrier of your property and religion. You have therefore calls from heaven and earth to maintain theſe; and if deaf to both calls, it muſt be concluded, that God has left you to yourſelves.

It has been ſurmiſed that ſome miniſters have thought undue influence neceſſary for the ſupport of government; an ample confeſſion of the unrighteouſneſs of their own adminiſtration; who, for evil purpoſes, would train men to move, only by hire. To ſuppoſe that country gentlemen, fairly ſent by the nation to do the buſineſs of it, would not do

that, is an infamous ſcandal beyond example, and contrary to all experience; amounting to this abſurdity, that they would not provide for their own neceſſary defence.

During the late crafty adminiſtrations, which waſted our treaſure, encreaſed our debts, and propagated our fatal pollution; the watch words of whig and tory, were ſkilfully applied to over-reach well meaning men, and keep the factions of deſigning miniſters cemented. And the odious appellation of Jacobite had its higheſt uſe; every man that oppoſed the corrupter of the nation, was defamed with this title. Honeſt gentlemen were alternately played at one another to miſlead both; and Jacobites were multiplied, to multiply troops and taxes.

Let not the friends of the king and the conſtitution be miſled by the common-place nonſenſe of national diſaffection, never univerſal, but when cauſe was given to make it ſo. Who, in ſuch caſe, could we blame, but miniſters and rulers preſiding theſe forty years under the houſe of Hanover; betrayed by ſervants creating cauſe of diſaffection; during a ſpace of time which has abundantly furniſhed them, not only with the means of eſtabliſhing the true family intereſt of two illuſtrious maſters; but likewiſe of

cheriſhing public and private virtue in the ſubject; thoſe real ſtabilities of the throne; the true ſource of loyal affection, and of all ſocial enjoyments. It has alſo given them full opportunities of ſhewing capacity, juſtice and aſſiduity in the ſervice of the ſtate; together with proper regard to the fundamental rights of the people. Would a miniſter governed by theſe maxims, become odious?

Suppoſe we divide the people of England into three claſſes.

Firſt, Partizans of the miniſter for place and profit.

Secondly, Jacobites.

Thirdly, Engliſh proteſtants, call them Whig or Tory, as you pleaſe; allowing them the uſe of reaſon, together with the ordinary paſſions incident to human nature, that of deſiring to maintain their freedom and property.

The firſt, following his whiſtle who feeds them, are not dreadful to his adminiſtration.

The ſecond, an offſpring of zealots, (early trained to ſupport the divine hereditary right of men, who forfeited all right by perſiſting to do every wrong) are not conſiderable in

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number; and had probably mixed with the maſs of rational men, had not the continued abuſes of adminiſtration furniſhed cauſe of clamour, enabling ſecret enemies of the conſtitution to cheriſh a groundleſs enmity to the ſucceſſion.

The third claſs, Engliſh proteſtants, apparently the bulk of this nation, if any diſtinction of party be ſuppoſed to exiſt at this day, ſtands thus. Tories always allowed to be friends to the conſtitution in church and ſtate; with ſome inconſiſtent early prejudice imbibed, touching non-reſiſtance; which they never did practice, and no free nation ever can. Whigs, reckoned to be more determined aſſertors of the liberty of the ſubject, and warmer and ſteadier friends to the Hanover ſucceſſion; *becauſe* this ſucceſſion beſpoke a ſecurity to that liberty. Effects will not, cannot, outlive their cauſe.

Among the Tories, perhaps at the head of them, we may place our body of eccleſiaſtics. Mad and virulent leaders formerly carried them great lengths. Freedom of education, in conſequence of opening the judgment, has mollified their tempers; and ſhewn them, that as free ſubjects, they have an intereſt preferable to the unmanly and narrow views of their predeceſſors. They have noble emoluments; they are now proteſtants in earneſt; they

reliſh

reliſh liberty; they are deeply intereſted in the preſervation of the ſucceſſion and conſtitution. They know that any momentous change muſt riſque their temporal bleſſings. Theſe well-founded conſiderations, added to an acquired generoſity of mind, will certainly diſpoſe them to adhere to the true intereſt of their country; CONSTITUTIONAL FREEDOM IN PARLIAMENT.

The ſtrength and views of this nation thus fairly ſtated, has any honeſt miniſter reaſon to fear diſaffection?

We boaſt, and with reaſon, of our memorable revolution; but will any man of ſenſe and candour ſay that it deſerves our high applauſe farther than as it enabled us to renew our conſtitution, and preſerve our religion?

The proteſtant ſucceſſion engendered by the revolution, was intended to perpetuate that conſtitution. The means, and only laſting means (let mountebank undertakers pretend as far as they will, and corrupt and deceive as far as they can) is the ſtrength and affections of the Engliſh nation. This has done, and will do what ſtanding armies and miniſters cannot. Whilſt the houſe of Hanover have one honeſt and intelligent miniſter he will urge this great truth.

The

The ſtrength of this nation conſiſts in its freedom; that mighty ſource of its trade and wealth, its content and numbers.

Impair the ſtrength of England, which would certainly be done by abridging its freedom; and you diminiſh its ability to ſupport the proteſtant ſucceſſion. Freedom gone, it would unavoidably fall a prey to its neighbours upon the Continent.

'This is famouſly verified in the ſtory of 'the Decemviri, a college of magiſtrates cre-'ated by the Romans for one year, to com-'pile and eſtabliſh a body of laws. This 'term was thought long enough, and un-'doubtedly was ſo; but theſe deſigning men 'under the plauſible colour of adding two 'more tables to the ten already finiſhed and 'publiſhed, got their ſitting prolonged for 'another year; nor at the expiring of that, 'though the two tables were added, did they 'diſſolve themſelves; but, in defiance of the 'people who choſe them, and now every 'where murmered againſt them, as well as 'ſuffered by them, continued their authority.

'The city of Rome ſaw itſelf under a new 'government; *deploratur in perpetuum liber-'tas, nec vindex quiſquam extitit, aut futurus 'videtur*; the conſtitution was gone, and

'though

'though all men complained, yet none of-
'fered to help. Whilſt the Romans were
'thus deſponding at home, they were de-
'ſpiſed abroad; the neighbouring nations
'were provoked, that dominion ſhould ſtill
'ſubſiſt in a city, where liberty ſubſiſted no
'longer. The Roman territories therefore
'were invaded by the Sabines, and the Æ-
'quians. This terrified the faction; but I do
'not find that it troubled the people, who
'neither feared nor hated foreign invaders
'half ſo much as their own domeſtic tray-
'tors. The deſperate parricides determined
'rather to ſacrifice their country than loſe
'their places; ſo to war they went but with
'miſerable ſucceſs. They managed the war
'no better than they did the ſtate; and had
'no more credit in the camp than in the
'city. The ſoldiers would not fight under
'deteſted leaders, but ran away before the
'enemy, and ſuffered a ſhameful rout.

'Nor did this loſs and diſgrace, at once
'unuſual and terrible to Rome, at all move
'the traytors to reſign, they went on miſ-
'governing and debauching, till, the meaſures
'of their wickedneſs being full, they were
'driven out of their poſts by the rigour of the
'ſtate, and the aſſiſtance of the people. The
'two chief traytors were caſt into priſon, the
'reſt into baniſhment.

'This ſoon happily changed the ſtate of affairs, and the ſpirit of the people; who having got at length an honeſt adminiſtration, and governors whom they loved and truſted, quickly beat the enemy out of the territories of Rome, that very enemy, who in other circumſtances had beaten them.'

'Rome, whilſt ſhe was free, that is, while ſhe kept her magiſtrates within due bounds, could defend herſelf againſt all the world, and conquer it; but being enſlaved, that is, her magiſtrates having broke their bounds, ſhe could not defend herſelf againſt her own ſingle tyrants, nor could they defend her againſt her foreign foes and invaders; for by their madneſs and cruelties they had deſtroyed her virtue, and exhauſted her ſtrength. This ſhews, that thoſe magiſtrates that are at abſolute defiance with a nation, either cannot ſubſiſt long, or will not ſuffer the nation to ſubſiſt long; and that mighty traytors, rather than fall themſelves, will pull down their country *.'

The affections of the people are governed, like thoſe of all free nations that ever were upon the globe, by the benefits they receive from government; the enjoyment of their rights and liberties.

With-

* Cato's Letters, vol. I. p.

Withdraw the affections of the people, by continuation of evil councellors, purloining the public revenue, and invading the rights of the people, even by a ſeeming legal authority, and you weaken the proteſtant ſucceſſion.

To preſerve affection, there muſt be equal enjoyment of rights; a fair and impartial treatment of the ſubject; offices, even of mere truſt and power, without profit, muſt not be engroſſed by tools and followers to oppreſs their fellow-ſubjects; and in filling public ſtations, a general preference muſt be given to merit and fitneſs, independent of all ſervile drudgery for the miniſter in parliament. Should a deſigning adventurer ſlide into your houſe, endowed with art and language to deceive, and determined to give up ſoul and body for preferment, he muſt not, under a load of corruption and vice, be raiſed to offices, upon the faithful diſcharge of which your preſervation depends. There muſt alſo be mutual confidence between governor and governed; which is incompatible with attempts productive of jealouſy in the people. A laudable paſſion in them tending to preſerve their liberty. The nation and its territories muſt be protected from its enemies abroad, and feel itſelf quite free and eaſy at home. If ſoldiers are enliſted upon public

faith to ſerve only at home in defence of their country for three years, and in all breach of agreement, are marched without arms to the water-ſide, there ſurrounded with an armed force, and tranſported like ſlaves, as a certain writer has aſſerted, diſguſt muſt enſue, and with it another evil, difficulty to recruit. A charge of this heinous nature in a free country appearing frequently in print, merits inquiry for the credit of government, and for juſtice to the oppreſſed ſoldier, if the charge be true; for juſtice to the characters of the officers, if it be not.

Should public ſpirited men receive continual marks of diſcouragement for being ſo, and men of the contrary ſtamp fatten upon the public treaſure for aiding to wrong your nation, affection will diminiſh.

Honeſty and oeconomy muſt appear in the management of your national purſe, or the higheſt diſcontent would unavoidably at one time or other enſue. Whoever looks into hiſtory, will ſee that no popular diſguſt whatſoever has cauſed ſo many commotions, as *oppreſſive* taxes. But were it poſſible at all times to ſuppreſs the fatal marks of reſentment; even that would not avail; becauſe a nation can be taxed only to a certain degree; exceed that, and they are bankrupts, as effectually as a private perſon can be. Diſabled

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to oppoſe a foreign enemy, your government would of courſe be overthrown, and yourſelves become a prey. Defence is neceſſary to preſerve affection; and popular affection has ever been ſought by wiſe princes.

To manage this affection to the beſt advantage, all poſſible care muſt be taken to preſerve and cheriſh unanimity. Divide the friends of the proteſtant ſucceſſion (which has been amazingly and ſucceſsfully done in a neighbouring country by two late ſucceſſive rulers; one ſtorming, the other undermining, deſtroying national confidence; both diſguſting) and you thus evidently weaken the ſtrength of that ſucceſſion; and by doing ſo, take ſteps tending to hazard the conſtitution: Becauſe there is ſcarce a poſſibility of preſerving it under the family who are antagoniſts to that ſucceſſion. Attempts in abundance were made, even whilſt there were proteſtant branches; but laws, compacts and promiſes were ever broken by them, or they had not been ſent to eternity or exile.

The conſtitution may indeed poſſibly be loſt under a proteſtant ſucceſſion; but in all human appearance, it would unavoidably be loſt under any other. To preſerve it you muſt certainly exclude popiſh rulers; and as certainly confine proteſtant ones to the ſtrict limits of your conſtitution.

An

An Engliſhman of rare abilities and public virtue, wrote many excellent pieces to preſerve the rights of his country from the miniſters of it. In one of his tracts * written near forty years ſince, he foretells, in theſe words, the ſteps and gradations which would be purſued by corrupt miniſters, to enſlave the people. Hear the political prophet:

'Such traytors will probably endeavour 'firſt to get their prince into their poſſeſſion, 'and, like Sejanus, ſhut him up in a little 'iſland, or perhaps make him a priſoner in his 'court; whilſt, with full rage, they devour 'his dominions, and plunder his ſubjects. 'When he is thus ſecluded from the acceſs 'of his friends, and the knowledge of his af-'fairs, he muſt be content with ſuch miſre-'preſentations as they ſhall find expedient to 'give him. Falſe caſes will be ſtated, to 'juſtify wicked counſel; wicked counſel will 'be given, to procure unjuſt orders. He 'will be made to miſtake his foes for his 'friends, his friends for his foes; and to be-'lieve that his affairs are in the higheſt proſ-'perity, when they are in the greateſt diſ-'treſs; and that the public matters go on in the 'greateſt harmony, when they are in the ut-'moſt confuſion.

'They will be ever contriving and forming 'wicked and dangerous projects, to make the

* Cato's Letters, vol. I. p. 112—116.

' the people poor, and themſelves rich; well
' knowing that dominion follows property;
' that where there are wealth and power, there
' will be always crowds of ſervile dependants;
' and that, on the contrary, poverty dejects
' the mind, faſhions it for ſlavery, and ren-
' ders it unequal to any generous undertak-
' ing, and incapable of oppoſing any bold u-
' ſurpation. They will ſquander away the
' public money in wanton preſents to mini-
' ons, and their creatures of pleaſure or of bur-
' then; or in penſions to mercenary and
' worthleſs men and women, for vile ends
' and traiterous purpoſes.

' They will engage their country in ridi-
' culous, expenſive, fantaſtical wars, to keep
' the minds of men in continual hurry and
' agitation, and under conſtant fears and
' alarms; and, by ſuch means, deprive them
' both of leiſure and inclination to look into
' public miſcarriages. Men, on the contrary,
' will, inſtead of ſuch inſpection, be diſpoſed
' to fall into all meaſures offered, ſeemingly,
' for their defence, and will agree to every
' wild demand made by thoſe who are be-
' traying them.

' When they have ſerved their ends by
' ſuch wars, or have other motives to make
' peace, they will have no view to the pub-
' lic intereſt; but will often, to procure ſuch

' peace,

'peace, deliver up the ſtrong holds of their 'country, or its colonies for trade, to open 'enemies, ſuſpected friends, or dangerous 'neighbours, that they may not be interrupt-'ed in their domeſtic deſigns.

'They will create parties in the common-'wealth, or keep them up where they already 'are; and by playing them by turns upon 'each other, will rule both. By making the 'Guelfs afraid of the Ghibilines, and theſe 'afraid of the Guelfs, they will make them-'ſelves the mediums and ballance between 'the two factions; and both factions, in 'their turns, the props of their authority, 'and the inſtruments of their deſigns.

'They will not ſuffer any men, who have 'once taſted of authority, though perſonally 'their enemies, and whoſe poſts they enjoy, 'to be called to an account for paſt crimes, 'though ever ſo enormous. They will make 'no ſuch precedents for their own puniſh-'ment; nor cenſure treaſon, which they in-'tend to commit. On the contrary, they 'will form new conſpiracies, and invent new 'fences for their own impunity and protec-'tion; and endeavour to engage ſuch num-'bers in their guilt, as to ſet themſelves 'above all fear of puniſhment.

'They

'They will prefer worthleſs and wicked 'men, and not ſuffer a man of known know-'ledge or honeſty, to come near them, or 'enjoy a poſt under them. They will diſ-'grace men of virtue, and ridicule virtue it-'ſelf, and laugh at public ſpirit. They will 'put men into employments, without any 'regard to the qualifications for theſe employ-'ments, or indeed to any qualification at all, 'but as they contribute to their deſigns, and 'ſhew a ſtupid alacrity to do what they are 'bid. They muſt be either fools or beggars; 'either void of capacity to diſcover their in-'trigues, or of credit and inclination to diſ-'appoint them.

'They will promote luxury, idleneſs, and 'expence, and a general deprivation of man-'ners, by their own example, as well as by 'connivance and publick encouragement. 'This will not only divert men's thoughts 'from examining their behaviour and poli-'ticks, but likewiſe let them looſe from all 'the reſtraints of private and public virtue. 'From immorality and exceſſes, they will 'fall into neceſſity; and from thence into a 'ſervile dependance upon power.

'In order to this, they will bring into fa-'ſhion, gaming, drunkenneſs, gluttony, and 'coſtly dreſs. They will debauch their

'country with foreign vices, and foreign in-
'ſtruments of vicious pleaſures; and will
'contrive and encourage public revels, nightly
'diſguiſes, and debauched mummeries.

'They will, by all practicable means of
'oppreſſion, provoke the people to diſaffec-
'tion; and then make that diſaffection an
'argument for new oppreſſion, for not truſt-
'ing them any further, and for keeping up
'troops; and in fine, for depriving them of
'liberties and privileges, to which they are
'intitled by their birth, and the laws of their
'country.

'If ſuch meaſures ſhould ever be taken in
'any free country, where the people chooſe
'deputies to repreſent them, then they will
'endeavour to bribe the electors in the choice
'of their repreſentatives, and ſo to get a coun-
'cil of their own creatures; and where they
'cannot ſucceed with the electors, they will
'endeavour to corrupt the deputies after they
'are choſen, with the money given for the
'public defence; and to draw into the per-
'petration of their crimes thoſe very men,
'from whom the betrayed people expect the
'redreſs of their grievances, and the puniſh-
'ment of thoſe crimes. And when they
'have thus made the repreſentatives of the
'people afraid of the people, and the people
'afraid of their repreſentatives; then they

'will

'will endeavour to perſuade thoſe deputies to 'ſeize the government to themſelves, and not 'to truſt their principals any longer with the 'power of reſenting their treachery and ill 'uſage, and of ſending honeſter, and wiſer 'men in their room.

'But if the conſtitution ſhould be ſo ſtub-'bornly framed, that it will ſtill preſerve it-'ſelf and the people's liberties, in ſpite of all 'villainous contrivances to deſtroy both; then 'muſt the conſtitution itſelf be attacked and 'broken, becauſe it will not bend. There 'muſt be an endeavour, under ſome pretence 'of public good, to alter a ballance of the go-'vernment, and to get it into the ſole power 'of their creatures, and of ſuch who will 'have conſtantly an intereſt, diſtinct from 'that of the body of the people.

'But if all theſe ſchemes for the ruin of 'the public, and their own impunity, ſhould 'fail them; and the worthy patriots of a 'free country ſhould prove obſtinate in de-'fence of their country, and reſolve to call its 'betrayers to a ſtrict account; there is then 'but one thing left for ſuch traytors to do; 'namely, to veer about, and, by joining with 'the enemy of their prince and country, 'compleat their treaſon.'

The

The extream danger of our ſituation, juſtifies open ſpeech. To the illuſtrious houſe upon the throne, and to their upright friends in truſt and power, we humbly call for relief. It can come only from them. The people cannot relieve their own complaints.

There is no poſſibility of ſaving this nation but by union; no union but by content; no content but by a real change of meaſures, to extirpate the jealouſies founded upon the encroachments made, by bribery and corruption of adminiſtrations. Such effectual change, ſtrengthened by ſome adequate law, is abſolutely neceſſary, to convince the ſubject that he has a permanent ſecurity for his conſtitutional right, of freely and frequently electing men to declare his ſenſe in parliament.

This is going to the root of national diſguſt; 'tis no time for palliating medicines; expedients, the ſtale device of narrow genius and wicked miniſters, would only renew and rivet jealouſies.

FINIS.